



## MINNESOTA

### Promoting Continuity of Care for Cancer Survivors in Minnesota

The transition from active cancer treatment to survivorship is difficult. Many health care providers are not aware of the challenges facing survivors as they complete their treatment. At a time when survivors are expected to feel successful and healthy, many face physical and emotional reminders of their treatment.

In 2008, a group of Minnesota Cancer Alliance (MCA) members gathered to start a project to address the needs of cancer survivors. They wanted to improve continuity of care for cancer patients—to help bridge the transition from active patient care to life beyond cancer treatment. One of the key recommendations in the Institute of Medicine’s report, *From Cancer Patient to Cancer Survivor: Lost in Transition*\* was that “the National Cancer Institute, professional associations, and voluntary organizations should expand and coordinate their efforts to provide educational opportunities to health care providers to equip them to address the health care and quality of life issues facing cancer survivors.” [page 354]

Inspired by this recommendation, the MCA group envisioned an interdisciplinary conference to educate health care providers about the special needs of cancer survivors. MCA member organizations and the National Cancer Institute sponsored the meeting. Other member organizations made donations totaling more than \$23,000. Several national comprehensive cancer control partners were involved in the development and success of the conference, including **LIVESTRONG**, the National Coalition for Cancer Survivors, the American Cancer Society, and the Patient Advocate Foundation.

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\*Institute of Medicine. *From Cancer Patient to Cancer Survivor: Lost in Transition*. Washington: National Academy of Sciences; 2005. Available at <http://iom.edu/Reports/2005/From-Cancer-Patient-to-Cancer-Survivor-Lost-in-Transition.aspx>.

The conference, Bridging the Transition to Life after Cancer Treatment, was held April 29–30, 2011 in Bloomington, Minnesota. More than 130 providers attended the conference, including 20 physicians, 28 nurses, and 8 social workers. Most participants came from Minnesota, but the audience included residents of eight other states, from as far away as Alaska.

Featured speakers included Dr. Patricia Ganz, a nationally recognized physician and cancer survivorship researcher from the University of California, Los Angeles, who spoke about improving quality of care, and Dr. Jon Hallberg, a well-known Twin Cities-area family practice physician and media personality who used theater to explore the patient experience.

Conference breakout sessions were organized into three tracks: identifying, preventing, and managing comorbidities and treatment-related complications; lifestyle recommendations to prevent chronic disease among cancer survivors; and psychosocial, spiritual, and relationship issues after cancer treatment.

Many participants were inspired to use survivor care plans for their patients. They also wanted to implement, expand, or improve survivorship programs and services in their cancer centers and work with other health professionals to improve continuity of care.

*The term “cancer survivor” refers to an individual who has been diagnosed with cancer, from the time of diagnosis throughout his or her life. The impact of cancer on family members, friends, and caregivers of survivors is also acknowledged as part of survivorship. Approximately 66% of people diagnosed with cancer are expected to live at least 5 years after diagnosis.*

